

Gold River, CA - Congressman Lungren (R-CA), who was instrumental in authoring legislation establishing the holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr., gave his support for a resolution encouraging Americans, especially young Americans, to dedicate a portion of the day to public service. A list of opportunities can be found at [serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) as well as [mlkday.gov](https://www.mlkday.gov).

Congressman Lungren gave the following remarks recently on the House floor:

"I thank the gentleman for the time. I thank him for bringing this bill to the floor. I thank the gentleman on the other side of the aisle for their support of this bill. Madam speaker, I rise as one who was part of the bipartisan coalition who established in this chamber the Martin Luther King Holiday some 2 1/2 decades ago.

"That was a glorious day here and it was a day in which we acted for the right reasons. Martin Luther King Jr. was born January 15, 1929. Perhaps it is fitting that Dr. King was born in that year for while the great crash of 1929 would shake the economic and financial fundamentals of our country and our society, Dr. King's life and work would just as dramatically shake this nation into reconfirming our commitments to a moral and constitutional foundations. Madam speaker, in honoring Dr. King we do not have the time to recount the entire complex history of civil rights in this country. But Dr. King knew and appreciated the shoulders upon which he stood.

"Slavery was our founding fault and segregation our enduring national stain. Dr. King knew these truths in his soul and knew many we would discuss today that fought their struggles for civil rights and laid the groundwork for Dr. King's life work. The gentleman from Georgia is one of those people. We have individuals like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, the African Americans who so nobly, heroically and tragically served in congress after the civil war. Booker T. Washington, the early founders of the NAACP, Emmet Till, Medgar Evers, those tirelessly persistent transportation less souls in Montgomery, the great individuals in Birmingham, Alabama, and Philadelphia, Mississippi who tried to cross the Edmund Pettis bridge and many

more. We think of those 180,000 African Americans who served and fought for this country during the civil war.

"Those who fought bravely against the sufferings, the lynching, the unspeakable lynchings, the violence, the defacto segregation, and enforced callousness and ruthlessness to be second class citizens in a nation founded on liberty. Many could have been bitter. Those who succeeded were not bitter, but they called us to our better spirits. Martin Luther King Jr. stood on this precedence admonishing us to look at their example and we should take pride in their and his commitment to equality and to civil rights.

Madam speaker, Dr. King's letter from a Birmingham jail is one of the finest articulations of the moral prerequisites of the rule of law and its fundamental necessity to our legal, political, and societal foundations ever written. When I talked to school children, often times I tell them to take a look at that letter.

"When you realize that letter was written without any access to books at the time and that he wrote under very difficult circumstances in a sparse jail cell, you appreciate even more the wisdom and the grace of the language that Dr. King used. His articulation of natural rights guarded by natural law of just and unjust laws, of the objective and non-arbitrary basis for the rule of law, trust, government, and moral order is in my judgment without comparison. So as we call in this resolution people in this nation, particularly young people, to dedicate a portion of that day to service of the country, let us remember the vision of Dr. King as he understood the true basis for laws in this country.

"When asked by some of the other ministers at Birmingham why he would interfere, he basically answered that it was his obligation to stand up against injustice. And he said that he was a man of the law, but we were called to follow just laws not unjust laws. And he answered the question as to the difference between the two and he, in my judgment, made a very, very specific reference to natural law. In which he said that there are those laws which violate the laws of God that we know them to be unjust and therefore we must work against them.

"I also remember in that letter he said to these ministers who were similarly Christian ministers when they accused him of being an outside agitator, and I can only paraphrase his words, but he said words to this effect, he said, what would Christ but an outside agitator for love. What was Christ but someone who attempted to seek justice and are not we called upon to do the same thing?

So as we in this resolution call upon young people and others in this country to commit some time in the service of others, let them understand that Dr. King's appeal went deeper than just serving another. It was serving another for the right reason. It was for fighting for justice not only in your community but anywhere that you saw injustice. There are few heroes in any lifetime that you have. But certainly for those of us old enough to have been alive during Dr. King's lifetime, even though we may not have marched with him, we were honored to be part of a generation that saw his life and his commitment and his call to justice and truth. And fundamentally to a full application of the constitution of the United States and the foundations which -- upon which this country is based. I thank you for the time. I yield back the balance of my time."

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Congressman Dan Lungren serves as Ranking Member on the House Administration Committee in addition to serving on the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees